



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 12 2011

Scripture Story: Genesis 12–15; 17:1–16; 18.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 11 and 12.

long, strange trip



Photo by Audrey Gaborth

flashlight

"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. . . . God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126).

keytext

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

(Genesis 12:2, NIV)

what do you think?

Throughout the Bible God calls on seemingly ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Fill in the blanks below.

_____ was called to deliver God's people from the Philistines.

_____ was very young and very afraid when called by God.

_____ spent 40 years getting ready for his task.

_____ has a name that sounds like that of his mentor, who was taken to heaven.

_____ volunteered to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

did you know?

The city of Ur—Abraham's home until God told him to leave—was a developed city, complete with libraries, schools, and a system of law. It was also a place where astrology was the main religion. Even Abraham's father, Terah, worshipped strange gods and idols (see Joshua 24:2). No wonder God told Abraham to leave.

INTO THE STORY

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

"So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there."

"Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord de-

stroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom."

"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.' But Abram said, 'O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?'"

"He took him outside and said 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'"

"God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'

"Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?'"

"The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground."

(Genesis 12:1-5; 13:10-12; 15:1, 2, 5; 17:1, 2, 15-17; 18:1, 2, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Put a *rectangle* around them.)

Why do you think God told Abraham to leave his home, his family, and his country?

What do you think God meant when He told Abram he must be “blameless”? How can we be blameless before God? (See Matt. 5:43-48; 1 John 1:8-2:2; Rev. 14:5)

What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham’s story? Explain.

What two lessons can Sarah’s life teach us?

1.

2.

punch lines

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NIV).

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life” (1 John 2:24, 25, NIV).

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5, NIV).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1, NIV).

“A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19, 20, NIV).

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Proverbs 8:17, NIV).

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV).

other eyes

“It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. clergyman.

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”—Lao Tsu, 6th-century B.C. Chinese philosopher.

Sabbath

Were you able to find all the answers in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson? Read the following scriptures below, each of which tells us something interesting about God's call to each of these people, and to us. Write a brief explanation of how God called each of these people to serve Him.

Judges 13:1-5. _____

Jeremiah 1:4-8. _____

Exodus 3:7-12. _____

What do you think God is calling you to do? Ask Him to show you, and have faith that He will.

Sunday

Read the Bible passages around which this lesson is built (*Into the Story* section). You will notice that these scriptures are a series of short passages about the life and times of Abraham. Based on what you just read, list the three most important moments in Abraham's life. Explain how these three moments changed Abraham's life. (Hint: One is provided for you.)

1. God tells Abraham to leave his home.
2. _____
3. _____

Monday

Read carefully Genesis 12:2. Imagine God coming to you and saying the following: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (NIV).

Most people do not believe it, but God wants to bless us beyond our wildest dreams. Look up the passages below to find out what God promised to do for the people mentioned there: Isaiah 56:4, 5. _____

Matthew 11:28. _____

John 10:28. _____

What can God do for you?

Tuesday

Notice the last sentence in the *Flashlight* section of the lesson.

Does this mean that Abraham never got upset with God for making such a challenging request of him? When God asks tough things of us, how should we respond?

What place in your life is God asking you to leave? Abraham could not receive the blessing God had for him until he was willing to leave all behind to follow God. What things are you willing to give up for God?

Wednesday

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" (Luke 9:25, NIV). That's one of the *Punch Lines* this week. Explain in your own words what this text means to you.

Do you know of someone who went after the alluring things of the world—money, riches, fame, illicit relationships, etc.—only to lose sight of who they really were? How can the *Punch Line* found in 1 John 2:24, 25 help to prevent this from happening to any of us?

Thursday

One of the truly sad episodes in the life of Abram and Sarai was the Ishmael scandal. Read Genesis 16:1-8. What did they do to "help" God's promise come true? How did their scheme turn out? In what ways might you be

trying to "help" God out—trying to make something happen for you that God alone has power to control?

Try this for one day: ask God's guidance about what to wear, what to eat, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say to those you meet, etc. Look for opportunities to seek God's guidance before you act.

Friday

Abraham's life of faithfulness got him into the great Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11. Most of us will never be asked by God to leave our home for a strange land we don't know. Most of us will never be asked to sacrifice a child. However, to achieve God's purpose for our lives, He will require a sacrifice of something we hold dear. Are you prepared to make that sacrifice?

In your own words, write a prayer to God asking Him to show you His plan for your life and to give you willingness and strength to sacrifice for Him.

Remember, God's timing may not match yours perfectly. He may choose to reveal His plan for your life in pieces, bit by bit. But if you trust Him and do not give up, He will bless you beyond your wildest dreams.

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 11 and 12.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.